



# Optimism and populism of large scale land acquisitions: A case study of Nansanga farm block in Zambia



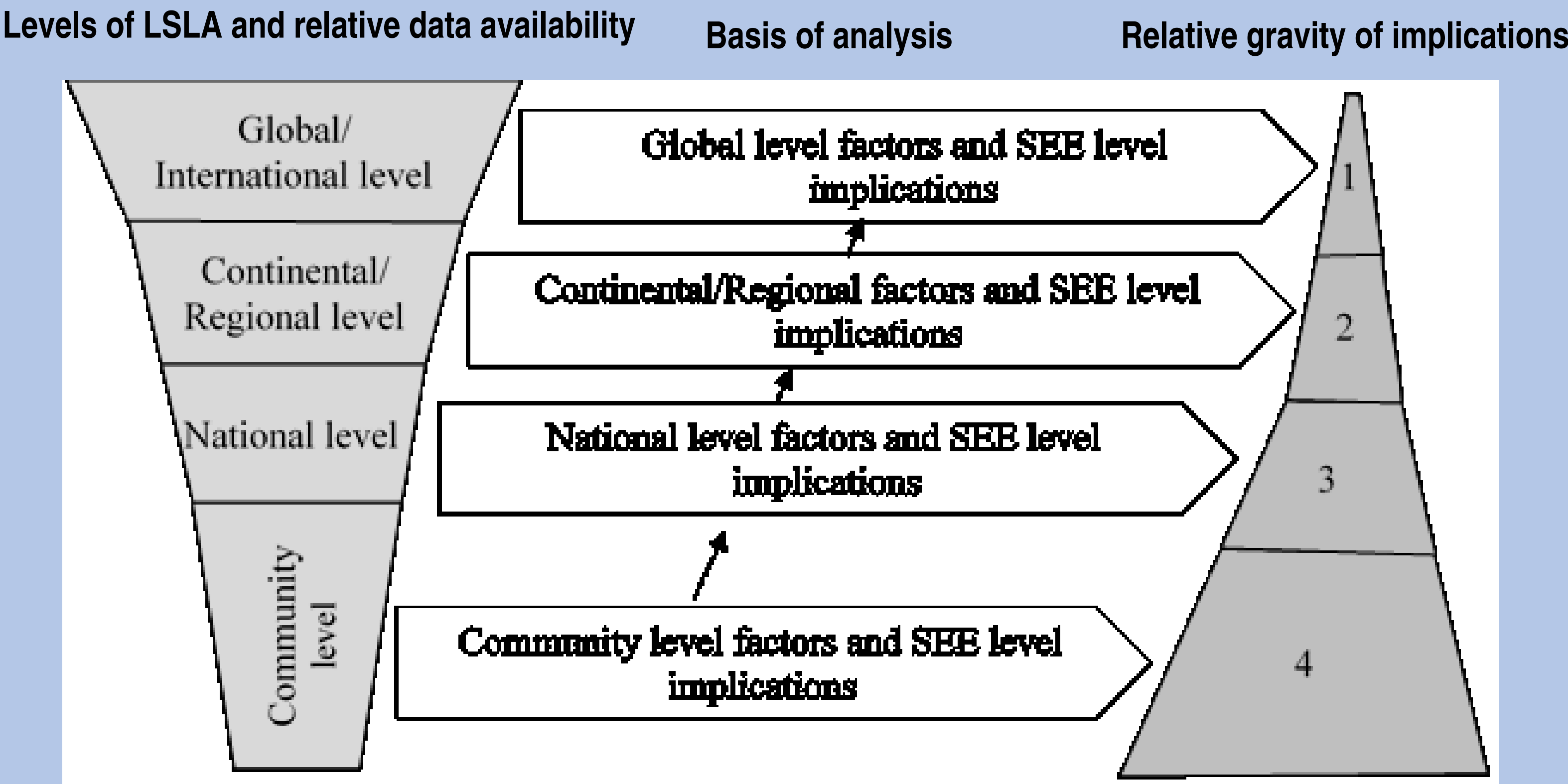
By Andrew Chilombo, PhD Candidate  
The University of Edinburgh, School of GeoSciences, UK  
Supervisors: Dr. Dan van der Horst and Dr. Casey Ryan

Contact details: A.chilombo@sms.ed.ac.uk  
chilombos@yahoo.co.uk  
+44 742 692 7966

### Introduction

The contemporary phenomenon of large scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) for food security, financial investments, carbon markets and biofuel production, have spurred polarised debates among development practitioners, policy makers, civil society organisations, business communities and local communities. The debates are bifurcated into techno-economic optimism on the one hand, and naively grounded and unsubstantiated populism, on the other. A comprehensive understanding of the scope of this phenomenon at international, regional, national and community levels has been elusive to social science research. This is due to methodological and epistemological challenges linked to the incipience and evolving nature of LSLAs. To reduce anecdotal claims that take potential socio-economic and ecological implications for actual impacts, getting facts right on LSLAs remains a scholarly imperative. Knowledge building with appropriate theoretical and conceptual underpinnings at community level where LSLAs actually happen, offers potential to challenge the mainstream socio-economic and ecological optimism and populism that characterise LSLA debates. Taking Nansanga farm block, a government of Zambia-led agricultural program to accelerate rural development, this research project seeks to understand implications of LSLAs at community level to contribute to the socio-economic and ecological debates of the phenomenon.

### Systematizing the understanding of Socio-economic and Ecological (SEE) Implications of LSLAs



### Research objectives:

1. To understand the implications on rural livelihoods and social differentiation of the farm block program as a vehicle of rural development;
2. To understand how the farm block program as a model of rural development has (re)shaped the asset portfolio of rural communities in Nansanga farm block; and
3. To explore the political, socio-economic and ecological dynamic contexts that determine winners and losers in customary land deals in Zambia.

### Methodological approach

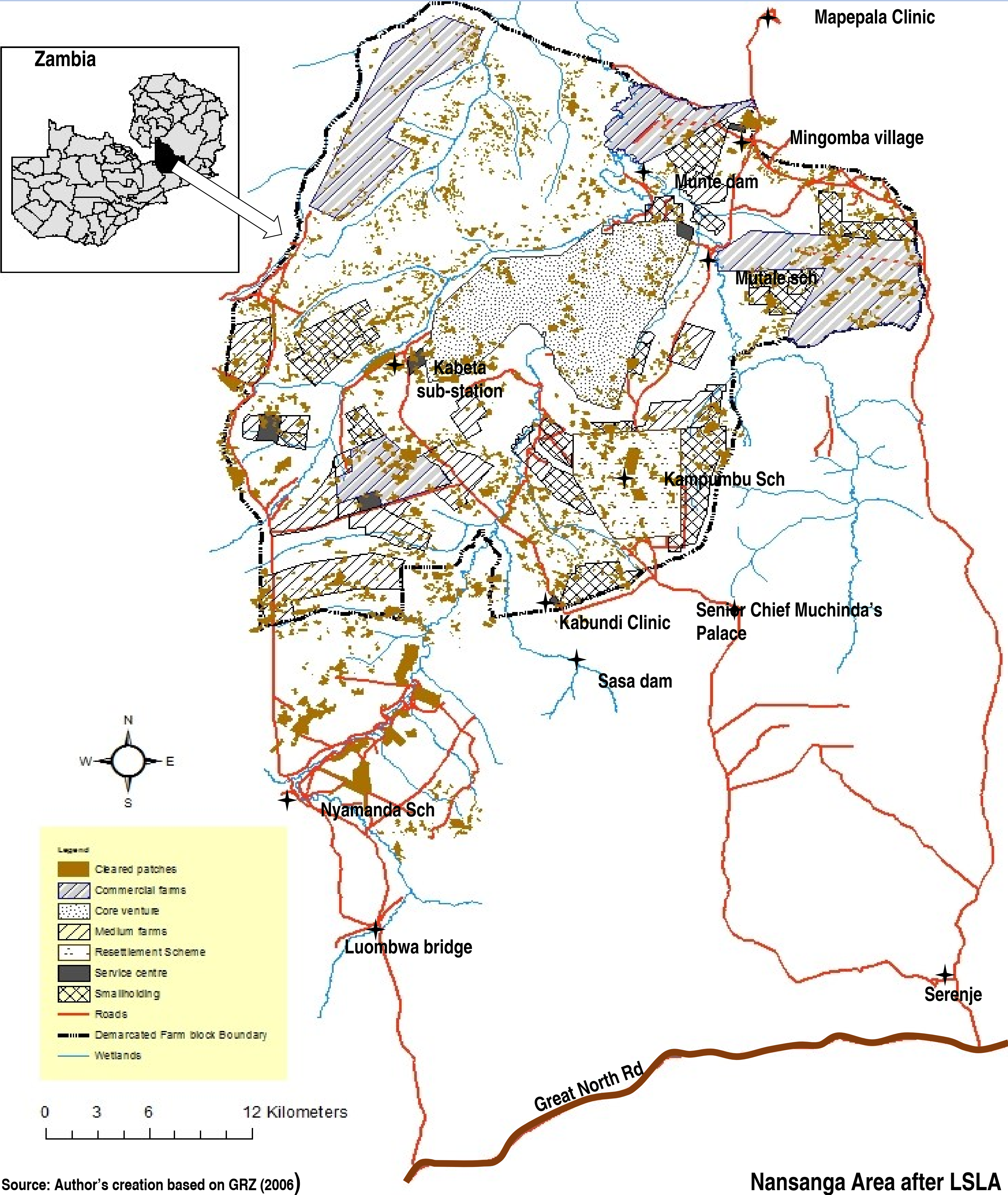
Co-production of data and knowledge with communities using Participatory Rural Appraisal methods:

1. Focus group discussions and Key Informant Interviews
2. Participatory resource mapping, transect walks
3. Participatory wealth ranking
4. Seasonal calendars
5. GIS resource map analysis
6. Analysis of secondary sources and Key Informant Interviews outside the farm block (government, Agri-business entities, researchers, development practitioners, civil society organisations)

### PRELIMINARY conclusion

While cash flow and physical capital have increased in Nansanga farm block area, preliminary results reveal joblessness; land-developers' indolence and land idleness; land speculation, lack of land use planning; erosion of social capital; amplified sense of tenure insecurity among community members; corruption; and immigration. Community access and user rights to land and associated resources have been undermined. Socio-economic and ecological implications of LSLA on rural communities are diverse and context-specific.

### Study area



### PRELIMINARY findings in pictures



### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the late Senior Chief Muchinda (gunned down 6 months after the preliminary data collection, results presented on this poster) for personal views about Nansanga farm block program; to the communities that were interviewed; and research assistants: Juliana; Yves; Chembo; and Ezekiah. Many thanks too to the University of Bonn Tropentag 2017 funders and sponsors.



### References

Borras, S., Hall, R., & Scoones, I. (2011). Towards a better understanding of global land grabbing: an editorial introduction. The Journal of Peasant Studies, 38(2), 209–216.  
Borras, S. M., & Franco, J. C. (2012). Global land grabbing and trajectories of Agrarian change: A preliminary analysis. Journal of Agrarian Change, 12(1), 34–59.  
Chambers, R. (1994). Participatory rural appraisal (PRA): Analysis of experience. World Development, 22(9), 1253–1268.